

A story about bad boys
May 2020

Well, we are certainly living through crazy times, aren't we? I'm writing to you from my home, where I have been, like most of you, trying to stay safe. I'm lucky, I'm with my love and our two boys and thanks to the wonder of the internet I am in touch daily with my other loved ones. We are all in this together after all. And it will pass, sooner rather than later I hope! So many people have lost so much and all we can really do is hope they know we are standing by their sides in the best way we can.

I'm working on two new books, the tenth Hugo investigation and the first Coco one. I've decided not to include the virus and the lockdowns in the stories for a number of reasons. Mainly because they don't really have a place in the fictional world but mostly because it would feel disrespectful and bordering on trivialising something which is so real and deadly for so many people.

Next up we have 'Les Mauvais Garçons,' which should make its summer release. It is off getting its spruce up and once that's done we should be able to set a release date, I'll keep you posted, but in the meantime, I thought I'd share a little bit of the history of the story. Many moons ago I wrote a book called "the Brighton Beach murders." It did the rounds of publishers and I had a couple of nibbles but nothing really came of it. The changes which were needed were ones I didn't want to make. I'm not a stubborn man, but I feel strongly that books and characters are created and deserve to be heard. The changes were too much I felt, so I moved on. I had planned on revisiting the story once I went down the indie publishing route but as you know, I ended up taken over by a certain Frenchman. Anyway, to cut a long story short, I had thought I would use the basis of that story for the ninth Hugo book (as I had done with similar old stories for books 2 & 3), but as with those other stories, in the end, they only really sought to be an inspiration for the new story. They serve as a basis, share some similarities but they really are very different and can be read separately without feeling as if you are reading the same story twice.

The premise involves the probable suicide of a young man in Paris. Hugo becomes involved, with great reluctance, at the insistence of his old nemesis, the Minister of Justice. I had always intended on Hugo returning to Paris at some point. It is, after all, his birthplace, but I could never quite decide how to do it because I knew it would involve the notion of somehow reuniting Hugo with his parents who have both been absent from his life for decades. I couldn't think how to do it justice. How to explain why the parents chose to leave this seemingly highly loveable character of mine and then finally I realised it didn't need to be a huge explanation. It just had to be. Once I realised I had been overthinking the whole thing, the rest fell into place. Hugo would return to Paris and deal with his past. I won't give too much of the story away, and I hope you'll think I've done it justice but I think perhaps you'll see Hugo does get the closure he needs.

Of course, I couldn't do a story called the bad boys without our very own resident bad-boy, Sebastian Auguste Dubois in attendance. Again though, his actual presence was unnecessary to the story so he is only seen briefly, although as usual, Sebastian certainly makes his presence felt! The book also makes for a sort of unofficial introduction to the spin-off world of Charlotte "Coco" Brunhild. You've met her briefly in 'La Famille Lacroix' but she has a much bigger role in the new book, working closely with Hugo and they do, I think, become firm friends. I really hope you take to Coco because by the time you read her I will more than likely have already finished her own story! The story itself begins with the suicide of a young man but it soon been apparent all is not what it seems, especially when another young man is found having been brutally murdered. There are obvious links between the two young men and a high-end fashionable club in Paris. Hugo and Coco begin their investigation and soon realise they have stumbled across something very dangerous.

The themes of child abuse are ones I take very seriously. I wrote about it in the first Hugo book and it appears here again. But this time, the story involves the Catholic Church, and therefore I wanted to present a story which is never quite what it seems. I don't ever trivialise anything in these stories but I do think it is important to explore the world and how we live it, how we see it. To confront prejudice

and to come together to fight the injustice of those who might be free from the heinous crimes they commit.

On that note, I'll take my leave from you, for now. I hope you are all well and please do get in touch with me on Facebook or Twitter or Instagram (although as I'm now a bit long in the tooth you're probably more likely to get a response from me on Facebook as the other two are a bit over my head!)

Much love, and wishes of good health and peace of mind.

Gary